

How Not to Accept a Communist International Decision

By JAY LOVESTONE.

IN making the report on the American question before the last Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, Comrade Kuusinen declared as follows:

"The question upon which the conflict arose in the American party was whether the party should fight in the immediate future for a labor party or not. As you know, the majority of the Central Committee of the party opposed it and the minority supported it. In the opinion of the commission, the majority based its policy in this respect too much on superficial temporary phenomena. The minority is absolutely right in its confidence of the vitality of the labor party movement." (Our emphasis.)

Here we have stated concretely and tersely what has been the major political issue before the membership of our party until the C. I. made the above declaration endorsing the stand taken by the minority of the Central Executive Committee.

The Limits of Mere Acceptance.

All but an insignificant handful in our party have declared their acceptance of this decision of the Communist International. But, since this decision was made by the plenum, some of our leading comrades have taken it upon themselves to interpret this decision as a repudiation of the labor party policy pursued by the Ruthenberg group. If our party is to carry out this Comintern decision wholeheartedly and effectively such misinterpretation must stop. The comrades must remember that a mere declaration of acceptance of a C. I. decision does not give them a license to continue a policy of misinterpreting to the membership the fundamental meaning of so basic a policy as the labor party declaration of the last plenum.

This article is written in order to help secure the conditions for effective execution of the C. I. decision—a proper understanding of this decision. Some leading comrades have, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps unwillingly, perhaps even without full understanding, accused the Ruthenberg group of standing for "fake" labor parties. In view of the fact that this charge is hurled against those comrades who have always stood for a vigorous labor party policy, the accusation tends to have an effect of discrediting our whole labor party campaign. It must be remembered that now, more than ever before, is it necessary to imbue our membership with an understanding of, rather than a sceptical attitude towards the need for a labor party campaign by our party. No one can deny that the months of insistent propaganda waged a short ago in our ranks against a labor party have borne harmful effects which still have to be counteracted ideologically.

Any comrade who spreads such unfounded accusations, as that of "fake" labor party, is making a serious mistake. This is true despite the fact that many comrades insist that the only requisite to being a Bolshevik is to make mistakes and then say: "Well, we admit our mistakes." However, admission of mistakes is no license to repetition of mistakes. Let us look the facts squarely in the face. How unwarrantable and dangerous such tactics are in a party discussion is to be seen from the following irrefutable facts:

From January, 1924, when the pres-

ent C. E. C. assumed the direction of party affairs and policies, until the C. E. C. majority, in October 1924, threw overboard our labor party policy, the Ruthenberg and Foster groups practically voted together and had a common policy in applying the labor party program.

We hereby show in tabular form an analysis of the voting record of the C. E. C. on the labor party policy from January to October 1924:

Table Showing Number of Occasions on Which the Ruthenberg and Foster Groups Agreed on the Application of the Labor Party Policy. (January to October 1924—till the C. E. C. Majority dropped the Labor Party Policy completely.)

The date, authors of proposals and the proposals follow:

1. Jan. 3, 1924, C. E. C., Ruthenberg—Proposals on St. Louis C. P. P. A. Conference. Unanimously adopted.

2. Jan. 3, 1924, C. E. C., Ruthenberg—Proposals on Minnesota situation relative to Party's attitude to Shipstead and Johnson. Unanimously adopted

3. Jan. 7, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding F. F. L. P. Unanimously adopted.

4. Jan. 7, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg—Three proposals on California L. P. situation. Unanimously adopted.

5. Jan. 16, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg-Pepper—Five motions regarding proposed May 30 conference. Unanimously adopted.

6. Jan. 16, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Five motions on North Dakota policy. Unanimously adopted.

7. Jan. 25, 1924, Council, Cannon—Four motions on policy regarding effort to postpone May 30 conference. Unanimously adopted.

8. Jan. 25, 1924, Council, Cannon—Five proposals regarding May 30 conference. Unanimously adopted.

9. Jan. 28, 1924, Polcom., Cannon—Six proposals regarding May 30 conference.

Ruthenberg—One proposal regarding May 30 convention.

Pepper—One proposal regarding May 30 convention. Unanimously adopted.

10. Feb. 8, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg-Cannon-Pepper—Motions regarding C. P. P. A. conference. Unanimously adopted.

11. Feb. 17, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg (5), Foster (2), Cannon (1)—Motions regarding May 30 negotiations. Unanimously adopted.

12. Feb. 18, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg (2), Foster (1)—Motions regarding policy of California F. L. P. Unanimously adopted.

13. Feb. 25, 1924, Council, Manley—Report on Nebraska-Grand Island F. L. P. convention sessions. Unanimously adopted.

14. Feb. 26, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Report on Minneapolis negotiations regarding May 30 conference. Adopted by all members of both groups except Pepper.

15. March 7, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Five proposals regarding March 10 conference.

Lovestone—Motion regarding this conference. Unanimously adopted.

16. March 7, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg (5), Pepper (1)—Proposals regarding F. F. P. organization campaign. Unanimously adopted.

17. March 17, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg-Foster (7)—Motions regarding C. P. policy. Unanimously adopted.

18. March 24, 1924, Polcom., Pepper—Motion to approve our policy regarding Reading L. P. Unanimously adopted.

19. March 25, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg—Motions regarding F. L. P. situation in Indiana. Unanimously adopted.

20. March 25, 1924, Polcom., Pepper (1), Foster (1)—Proposals regarding California situation. Unanimously adopted.

21. March 25, 1924, Polcom., Pepper (4)—Motions regarding Minnesota situation. Unanimously adopted.

22. March 25, 1924, Polcom., Pepper (2)—Proposals as to opposing W. P. members running on F. L. P. tickets without announcing themselves Communists. Unanimously adopted.

23. April 2, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding New York L. P. situation. Unanimously adopted.

24. April 24, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding L. P. situation in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, New York and Oklahoma. Unanimously adopted.

25. April 24, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding California, Indiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania L. P. situations. Unanimously adopted.

26. April 28, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding Minnesota situation. Unanimously adopted.

27. May 24, 1924, C. E. C., Ruthenberg (10)—Proposals regarding June 17 convention policy.

Bittelman (7)—Proposals regarding June 17 convention policy. Unanimously adopted.

28. May 14, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding labor party campaign, C. P. P. A., Committee 48, Oklahoma, etc. Unanimously adopted.

29. May 21, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg (5)—Proposals regarding Oklahoma F. L. P. Motion to defer. Unanimously adopted.

30. May 21, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg (2)—Proposals regarding Pennsylvania Labor party policy. Unanimously adopted.

31. May 21, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg (3)—Proposals regarding New York, Colorado, Minnesota situations. Unanimously adopted.

32. May 26, 1924, Council, Bittelman—Proposal regarding special declaration on L. P. policy. Unanimously adopted.

33. May 27, 1924, Council, Bittelman—Proposal regarding LaFollette attack on Communists. Unanimously adopted.

34. May 31, 1924, Council, Lovestone (3)—Proposals regarding California situation. Unanimously adopted.

35. June 7, 1924, C. E. C., Foster—Motion regarding C. I. decision. Unanimously adopted.

36. June 8, 1924, C. E. C., Sub-Committee—Report on policy and platform. Unanimously adopted.

37. June 8, 1924, C. E. C., Sub-Committee—Special platform report. Unanimously adopted.

38. July 16, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg (3)—Motions regarding Montana situation. Unanimously adopted.

39. July 26, 1924, Council, Bittelman (6)—Motions regarding C. P. P. A. Unanimously adopted.

40. Aug. 2, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg—Election platform and labor party. Unanimously adopted.

41. Aug. 4, 1924, Polcom., Ruthenberg-Bittelman—Proposals regarding California situation. Unanimously adopted.

42. Aug. 25, 1924, Polcom., Cannon—Motions regarding Buffalo L. P. policy. Unanimously adopted.

43. Sept. 22, 1924, Council, Ruthenberg—Proposals regarding North Dakota labor party. Unanimously adopted.

TABLE NO. 2.

Table Showing Number of Occasions on Which the Ruthenberg and Foster Groups Disagreed on the Application of the Labor Party Policy (January to October, 1924, till the C. E. C. Majority Dropped the Labor Party Policy Completely).

The date, authors of proposals, and proposals follow:

1. Jan. 25, Council, Pepper—Motion declaring that Mahoney was influenced by right wing elements in postponing May 30th convention and that C. E. C. should carry out energetically its January full meeting decision on this matter. Lost by groups' votes.

2. Jan. 28, Pol. Com., Pepper—Proposal regarding May 30th convention. Foster—Proposal regarding May 30th convention. Lost (Pepper's), Carried (Foster's), by groups' voting.

3. Feb. 15, C. E. C., Majority-Minority—Theses on present political situation. Carried (Majority's by 8 to 5).

4. March 7, Council, Pepper—Amendment to one of Ruthenberg proposals regarding March 10th conference. Lost. Pepper, Engdahl, Lovestone vote in affirmative, all rest negative.

5. March 25, Pol Com., Pepper—Regarding F. F. L. P. in Illinois. Foster—Amendment to this motion. Carried (Foster's amendment) by groups' voting.

6. March 25, Pol Com., Pepper (2), Ruthenberg (2)—Proposals regarding Minnesota situation. Cannon (7)—Proposals for Minnesota situation. Carried (Cannon's proposals instead of Pepper-Ruthenberg motions).

7. May 2, C. E. C., Ruthenberg—Proposal regarding June 17th policy. Lost, by groups' voting.

8. May 21, Council, Bittelman—Regarding instructing members in securing petition signatures in Oklahoma. Lost, tie vote, group versus group.

9. May 27, Council, Lovestone (2)—Motions regarding California situation. Lost, by groups' voting.

Louder Than Words.

This record is very plain. This record speaks louder than the loudest words of misrepresentation hurled by the C. E. C. Majority supporters. This record shows clearly that from January, 1924, until the C. E. C. Majority repudiated the Labor Party policy and campaign the two groups participated in voting on Labor Party policies on 53 occasions, involving a minimum of 146 motions. This record shows that on 43 occasions involving a minimum of 130 motions dealing with the application of the party's Labor Party policy the Ruthenberg and Foster groups

reached unanimity. On only ten occasions involving 16 motions dealing with our Labor Party policy did any differences manifest themselves while the party was pursuing the Comintern policy towards the Labor Party campaign.

The writer has made no effort to defend the position of the C. E. C. Minority against the attacks of the Majority of the C. E. C. First of all, these attacks are of a non-serious nature. Secondly, the best defense and criticism of the Labor Party position taken by the Minority is already to be found in the decision of the Communist International. The Minority of the C. E. C. has fought for this decision before the Comintern while the Majority of the C. E. C. was fighting against it. The Minority of the C. E. C. has forced the Majority of the C. E. C. to consult the Comintern on the Labor Party tactics before a convention and thus spared the party the possible overruling of its convention by the Communist International.

"Fakes" and Fakes.

If there is anything at all in the "fake" Labor Party accusation hurled at the Minority of the C. E. C. by the C. E. C. Majority group, the Foster group shares this blame equally with the Ruthenberg group. The two groups have made jointly nearly all the Labor Party policy mistakes which were made by the party during this period. The two groups have voted the overwhelming number of times unanimously on the application of the Labor Party policy while the C. E. C. Majority permitted the party to have a Communist pro-Labor Party policy and not a sectarian anti-Labor Party policy.

If the C. E. C. Majority insists that its application of the Labor Party policies cannot be characterized as "fake," then, in the face of the above analysis, the application of the Labor Party policy by the Minority equally cannot be characterized as fake.

A Dangerous Practice.

We fear that the poisonous slogan of "fake" Labor Party thrown in by the C. E. C. Majority only tends to discredit the Labor Party policy adopted by the party thru the advice of the Comintern. What more effective weapon could the C. E. C. Majority employ against the Labor Party policy than to brand the most consistent and politically honest supporters of this policy as advocates of "fake" labor parties? In effect this campaign of the C. E. C. Majority only tends to strengthen the already existing anti-Labor Party tendencies in our ranks, tendencies for which their months of energetic propaganda are largely responsible.

Consequently, the membership of our party must, in the most decisive terms, declare themselves that after the last Communist International decision on the Labor Party policy, the Workers (Communist) Party of America will brook no further opposition to a Communist Labor Party policy, and will tolerate no further hostility to a vigorous Labor Party campaign regardless of the form in which this hostility may manifest itself.

The present economic and political situation calls for the united efforts of all the Communist elements in our party for an unhesitating and vigorous Labor Party campaign.